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Howard Hughes And A Sunken Soviet Sub

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Los Angeles

The Central Intelligence Agency contracted with Howard Hughes to raise a sunken Soviet nuclear submarine from the North Atlantic, the Los Angeles Times reported yesterday.

The story, which the paper said was based on reports circulating among local law enforcement officers, was denied immediately by Hughes officials.

The newspaper said the operation was attempted by the crew of a supersecret marine mining vessel owned by Hughes' Summa Corp. and designed by a Los Angeles firm.

It said it was unclear whether the operation was in fact carried out.

Confidential files on the operation are believed to have been among the documents stolen by safecrackers from Summa's offices in Hollywood last June, the Times said.

The thieves reportedly are holding the documents and demanding a ransom one source put at $1 million. Negotiations reportedly went on for several months, but are now suspended.

Paul Reeve, head of Summa's ocean mining division, said in a telephone interview in Houston, "There is no fact behind it at all. There was no contract with the CIA."

Former U.S. Attorney General William Saxbe, FBI director Clarence Kelley and top CIA officials reportedly have conferred with Los Angeles county District Attorney Joseph Busch and Los Angeles Police Chief Edward Davis because of possible national security ramifications of the burglary investigation.

Neither Busch nor Davis would comment on the case, but Commander Peter Hagan, the police public information chief, said the grand jury investigation next week will take up the Summa safecracking.

Associated Press